defence, and 1417 Joint Forest Management (JFM) committees involved actively in forest protection.

Selling of forest Land in Mumbai

592. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the news-item titled "20 Mumbai estates built on forest scam land" appeared in the media recently;

(b) if so, what are the details of forests land, the use of which has been converted into residential and commercial at Thane and Pune districts of Maharashtra;

(c) how much forest land has been sold off a Sahara Group of Companies for commercial activity and at what price;

(d) whether the Government of Maharashtra obtained the permission of Central Government for converting and selling forest land into Commercial/residential purposes; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV): (a) Yes, Sir, as per information received from Government of Maharashtra such news-item appeared in the daily, "The Asian Age' on 4th June, 2003.

(b) As intimated by the State Government it is not true that 20 Mumbai estates have been built on the forest land in Thane and Pune districts as mentioned in the news-item. The concerned village Chichwan is located in Panvel Taluka of Raigad district and not in Thane or Pune district. The Forest Department had acquired these lands under the relevant sections of Indian Forest Act, 1927 and Maharashtra Private Forest (Acquisition) Act, 1975. However, the Deputy Collector, Panvel restored some land back to the owners but the major land owner, Metropolitan Land Finance Corporation, filed Writ Petition in the High Court of Mumbai against the acquisition of land and the writ was allowed. Though the SLP filed by the State in the Supreme Court was dismissed

but the State was allowed to file a review petition in High Court, Mumbai and this matter is, therefore, still subjudice in the said High Court.

(c) No forest land has been sold off by the State Government to Sahara Group of Companies for commercial activity, therefore, the question of land price does not arise.

(d) Government of Maharashtra has not entered into any contract of agreement with Sahara Company for converting and selling of forest land for commercial and residential purpose. Therefore, the question of obtaining permission of Central Government does not arise.

(e) Does not arise.

Conservation of urban lakes

593. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some badly polluted urban lakes were identified way back in 1994 for conservation by Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a also a fact that most of these lakes are still polluted and stinking as nothing has been done to make them pollution free; and

(d) if so, what action Government propose to take to clean these lakes within a time frame?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV): (a) to (d) The Lake Conservation under National Lake Conservation Plan (NLCP) was taken up in May, 2001 with the approval of proposals for 3 lakes namely Powai, Ooty and Kodaikanal. Till date projects for conservation of 24 lakes have been approved after considering varius proposals by State Governments. The Tenth Plan outlay for NLCP is Rs. 220.00 crore.

Genetically modified seeds

594. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state: